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ABSTRACT

The Joint Committee on Transfer Students (JCTS), comprised of faculty and administrators from two- and four-year institutions, was established by Virginia's State Council of Higher Education (SCHE) and State Board for Community Colleges (SBCC) in October 1990. In order to develop policy recommendations designed to facilitate student transfer, in April 1991 the JCTS conducted a series of campus hearings throughout the state, involving students, faculty, counselors, and administrators. Endorsed by both the SCHE and the SBCC, this policy statement makes a series of proposals regarding: admissions; acceptance and application of credits; the development of a transfer module; communication and information; administrative responsibility for transfer; services for transfer students; transfer student responsibilities; minority students and transfer; and tracking transfer students. Specific policy recommendations include the following: (1) students who have earned an associate degree based upon a baccalaureate-oriented sequence will be considered to have obtained junior standing; (2) the colleges should adopt a transfer module system, a coherent set of courses that forms the foundation of a solid liberal education and assures students that a core of courses will transfer; (3) one person should be designated as chief transfer officer at each institution; and (4) community colleges should determine whether minority students are being counseled into or otherwise enrolled disproportionately in programs that are not designed to transfer. Transfer module guidelines and courses are appended. (PAA)

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State Policy on Transfer

Joint Committee on Student Transfer
Virginia Community College System
Richmond
Virginia

December 1991

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SCHEV STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR VIRGINIA

STATE POLICY ON TRANSFER

INTRODUCTION

Virginia's system of public colleges and universities has extended higher education throughout the Commonwealth from Eastern Shore to Big Stone Gap and from Fairfax to Southside. The system gives students ready access to college and enables them to choose from among many two- and four-year institutions. The Commonwealth has created a remarkable system intended to provide an educated and responsible citizenry and well-trained professionals.

For Virginia to achieve these goals fully, especially in a time of financial stringency, the system must function as efficiently and effectively as possible. This means institutions must work together in partnerships for the benefit of students. The Commission on the University of the 21st Century believed that cooperation among institutions is essential. "We cannot place too much emphasis upon the importance of cooperation," the Commission wrote.

Some students begin college at a community college and subsequently transfer to a senior college or university to achieve their educational aspirations. These students must be assured of fair access to a four-year education and reasonable credit toward a bachelor's degree for their community college courses and program. Transfer should be easy and orderly. According to the Commission on the University of the 21st Century, "It should be made as easy as possible for graduates of community colleges to transfer to senior institutions and get full credit for the work they have done."

Transfer is also a matter of national interest. The American Council on Education recently issued a major policy statement - Setting the National Agenda: Academic Achievement and Transfer. The ACE believes that qualified community-college students should be able to "transfer easily and routinely" to senior colleges and universities. "America's community colleges in particular embody our hopes for the future. For millions of students, they are the entry point to higher education and thus serve as the avenue to intellectual and economic growth. Entry to senior colleges or universities by community college students, i.e., transfer, is central to the realization of equal opportunity in education."

This goal of smooth and orderly transfer has not been fully achieved, even though a number of community colleges and senior institutions have worked together diligently. There are still important issues to resolve regarding, for example, transfer of credits, inconsistency in the content of presumably similar courses, incomplete transfer guides, the absence or inadequacy of articulation agreements, and ineffective communication between senior institutions and community colleges.

Ideally, students should be able to move through Virginia's public education system as if it were a continuum, rather than a system of distinct levels or separate stages.

The Joint Committee on Transfer Students was established by the State Council of Higher Education and the State Board for Community Colleges in October 1990. The membership includes faculty and administrative representatives from both community colleges and senior institutions, with staff support from the Virginia Community College System and the State Council. The JCTS has been charged with recommending means to facilitate transfer from community colleges to senior institutions. The Committee has, in effect, been asked to recommend policies that will foster improved transfer practices in the Commonwealth.

To help arrive at policy recommendations on transfer, the JCTS sought the opinions of students, faculty, counselors, and administrators through a series of campus hearings. Held in April of 1991, the hearings resulted in several major findings about the status of student transfer in Virginia. These findings helped focus the committee's work on those issues most in need of resolution. The committee also examined transfer policies adopted by more than a dozen other states. An early draft of the report was the focus of discussion at a major conference on transfer held at the University of Virginia on October 10, 1991. Subsequent drafts were discussed with the General Professional Advisory Committee and the Instructional Programs Advisory Committee. All of these discussions provided the committee with valuable suggestions for improving and clarifying the document.

The Joint Committee has been guided by several assumptions in formulating the policy it is recommending:

- All capable students in the Commonwealth should have access to four years of higher education.
- The institutional autonomy and diversity of Virginia colleges and universities are valuable and must be assured.
- Every senior institution should take significant responsibility for enrolling community college students.
- Effective transfer is a joint responsibility of community colleges and senior institutions.
- Transfer students and native students should be assured of equitable treatment by each senior college and university.
- Students should be encouraged to advance as far through the educational system as they are able.
- Students should not have to repeat coursework they have completed satisfactorily at a community college.
- The Commonwealth should have a coherent statewide policy on transfer that encourages continuing cooperation and can be sustained over time.

The Joint Committee on Transfer Students herewith recommends a statewide policy to facilitate transfer between state-supported community colleges and senior colleges and universities. The Committee also recommends a series of implementation measures necessary to effect this policy.

This policy — consisting of a set of modest proposals — can make a real difference. Anything less will probably not achieve the goal of making transfer both easy and routine. The policy requires change by community colleges and senior institutions. It also requires commitment by both to common goals on behalf of students and education. It requires a strong sense of mutual concern and trust.

STATE POLICY ON TRANSFER

Endorsed by State Board for Community Colleges November 21, 1991
Endorsed by State Council of Higher Education December 10, 1991

I. ADMISSIONS

A. Senior institutions have authority over admissions decisions to their institutions and to programs within their institutions. However, each senior institution should have a policy, approved by appropriate institutional parties and reviewed regularly, on admission of transfer students.

B. This policy should be based upon sound information about performance of transfer students at the institution and should be consistent from year to year. It should address matters such as the number of Virginia community-college transfer students[1] who will be offered admission, whether students from the local area are given preference, and whether preference is given to students who have been awarded a transfer associate degree or to those who have completed the transfer module (see Section III for a description of the transfer module).

C. Each student who satisfactorily completes a transfer-degree program at a community college in Virginia should be assured the opportunity to transfer to a state-supported baccalaureate institution.[2] It is the responsibility of all senior institutions to provide reasonable access to community-college graduates who meet the typical admissions criteria of a given institution. Student performance in a transfer-degree program is a strong indicator of success in senior institutions and, therefore, should count heavily in the evaluation of transfer applicants.

D. Transfer admissions priority should be given to students who have completed a transfer degree over those who have not.

E. Admission to a given institution does not guarantee admission to particular degree-granting programs, majors, minors, or fields of concentration. Nevertheless, every baccalaureate degree program should provide reasonable avenues for admission of transfer students.

F. Admission to specific programs, majors, minors, and fields of concentration may require, for example, a minimum grade point average and specific prerequisite courses. Such requirements should be applied equally to native and transfer students.

II. ACCEPTANCE AND APPLICATION OF CREDITS

A. It is the intention of the Commonwealth of Virginia that students who begin their work toward the baccalaureate degree by enrolling in transfer programs in community colleges will have this work recognized as legitimate and equivalent to that offered at senior institutions.

B. Articulation between community colleges and senior institutions is a reciprocal process. Community colleges have the responsibility of ensuring that their programs and courses are equivalent to those offered at senior institutions, and senior institutions have an obligation to recognize such work as equivalent, once the two parties have determined equivalency.

C. Students who have earned an associate degree based upon a baccalaureate-oriented sequence of courses should be considered to have met lower-division general-education requirements of senior institutions.[3] These students will be considered to have attained junior standing (typically defined by credits completed at the senior institution). It may, however, take transfer students longer than two years to complete the baccalaureate because of prerequisites in the major or other requirements or circumstances.

D. Where students must satisfy additional general-education requirements — credits in upper-division general education or foreign languages required of native students, for example — senior institutions should publish such requirements.

E. Some occupational-technical programs (the Associate of Applied Science and the Associate of Applied Arts) have counterparts in senior institutions (e.g., nursing, engineering technology, hotel and restaurant management). Senior institutions and community colleges should look for ways to facilitate student transfer into these programs. Transfer from occupational-technical programs will continue to be worked out through articulation agreements or on a case-by-case basis.

F. Community colleges should counsel carefully those occupational-technical students who express an interest in transfer in their choice of appropriate courses. And senior institutions should be well informed about community-college curricula so that students do not need to retake courses that essentially repeat courses from the community-college program.

III. TRANSFER MODULE

A. Although community colleges typically recommend that students complete the associate degree prior to transfer, many students choose to transfer before graduating.

B. It would be beneficial, therefore, to adopt a mechanism that a) provides a recommended program of study for students who begin at community colleges without a clear sense of their future educational goals, b) assists students in planning a rigorous and well-rounded program of study prior to transfer, and c) provides them with certain guarantees about the acceptability of the courses in this program of study.[4]

C. At the same time, this mechanism could help senior institutions by a) presenting to them transfer applicants who had fulfilled many of their general-education requirements, and b) relieving them of the need to review student transcripts on a course-by-course basis.

D. The transfer module, identified in the appendix, presents such a mechanism. In essence, the transfer module is a coherent set of courses that forms the foundation of a solid liberal education for college students[5] and assures students that a core of courses will transfer. Although the module may not satisfy all general-education requirements at a senior institution, the institution should guarantee at a minimum that it will accept these courses and that they will apply toward meeting general-education requirements.

E. All courses must be completed within the Virginia Community College System, and students must earn a grade of C or better in each course if they wish to transfer the set of courses as a module.

F. Each senior institution should publish the set of courses that it considers equivalent to this module and the extent to which the module satisfies its general-education requirements. If necessary, senior institutions should specify those courses beyond the module that students must satisfy to have completed the general-education requirements of that institution or its individual programs. The senior institution may have, for example, additional lower-division credit requirements, upper-division general education requirements, and may also require demonstrated competency in foreign languages.

G. Some professional schools — such as engineering, fine arts, and pharmacy — may determine that the transfer module is not congruent with their lower-division requirements. In such cases, these schools or colleges should sign general articulation agreements with the Virginia Community College System that specify a more appropriate lower-division general-education program of study. If the professional school does not publish specific criteria and does not enter into an agreement with the community colleges, then the transfer module will apply and be honored by those schools.

H. Community-college students fulfilling the module with satisfactory performance will be certified by the VCCS as having completed the module. This will assure them that they will receive 35 credits at any state-supported senior institution to which they have been admitted. Students are not required to complete the associate degree to have their transfer module accepted..

IV. COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

A. Community colleges and senior institutions — and state agencies as well — share an obligation to facilitate transfer. Good communication is the single most important factor in successful student transfer and articulation. Therefore, all parties should ensure effective communication with one another. Such communication needs to take place statewide as well as on a local or regional basis.

1) Faculty in the same disciplines in community colleges and senior institutions should meet periodically to discuss common issues.

2) Community colleges should create opportunities for students who have transferred from their college to meet with current students who are considering transferring.

3) Senior institutions should provide periodic advising sessions to potential transfer students prior to the time they transfer.

4) Community-college counselors should meet at least once a year with key transfer decision-makers from senior institutions to discuss program changes. (For example, the associate dean of the business school who handles all transfer students would discuss changes, if any, in program requirements needed to transfer to the business school of that institution.)

5) Counselors and faculty at community colleges who advise students on transfer should meet periodically to discuss issues such as program changes.

6) Transfer decision-makers at senior colleges and universities should meet periodically with the faculty in their institutions who advise students on transfer to update them on possible changes.

7) Senior colleges and universities should provide students who transfer with a formal evaluation of their transfer credits prior to their initial registration.

B. Articulation agreements between community colleges and senior institutions and their individual programs are beneficial to student transfer and should be encouraged. Articulation agreements work only if

a) they are developed and maintained mutually between representatives from community colleges and senior institutions,
b) they are widely disseminated and clearly stated,
c) they spell out clearly what, if anything, is guaranteed to students,
d) both parties abide by them, and
e) community colleges and senior institutions inform one another promptly whenever they change program or degree requirements. Institutions should abide by their original agreements long enough for transfer students to adjust to the changes.

C. Consistent with current practice, all senior institutions should publish a transfer guide annually. Transfer guides are the most important method by which baccalaureate-bound students can plan an appropriate program of study at a community college. Transfer guides work best if

a) the information on transferability of credit is current,
b) the information and format are consistent among senior institutions,
c) they are easily available to students, faculty, and counselors,
d) program-specific requirements are available in the guides, and
e) they are provided prior to fall registration.

D. The current transfer guides do not make use of available technology for the efficient transmission of information. Therefore, the state should establish an on-line electronic database in an interactive format that assists prospective transfer students in making course selections in such a way as to maximize transferable credits to the senior institutions.

V. ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR TRANSFER

A. One person should be designated as chief transfer officer at each institution or campus.

B. Each senior institution should establish a central source of information on transfer. This clearinghouse function might be housed in the admissions office or be served by a central database that can be accessed widely on campus.

C. In addition, a person at each school or college at the senior institution, preferably someone within each dean's office, should be designated as the person with final authority on transferability of courses in the major. A process for students to appeal decisions about transfer of credits should be established and well publicized.

VI. SERVICES FOR TRANSFER STUDENTS

Transfer students to senior institutions should have, to the extent possible, the same opportunities as other native students of comparable standing in such areas as course selection, registration, access to campus housing, and financial aid.

VII. TRANSFER STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Students intending to transfer need to take responsibility for planning their course of study to meet the requirements of the institution(s) to which they desire to transfer. The student is responsible for seeking out the information and advice that is necessary to develop such a plan. Students are encouraged to choose as early as possible the senior institution and program into which they would like to transfer. Delays in developing and following an appropriate plan or changes in plans (e.g., change in major) may reduce the applicability of transfer credit to the degree program a student ultimately selects.

VIII. MINORITY STUDENTS AND TRANSFER

In order to ensure that minority students are being encouraged to pursue the bachelor's degree, community colleges should determine whether minority students are being counseled into or otherwise enrolled disproportionately in programs that are not designed to transfer.

IX. TRACKING TRANSFER STUDENTS

A. Senior institutions should report community-college transfer-student progress to the community colleges in a consistent, identifiable form. This information should track students for at least three years or until the student graduates or withdraws from the senior institution, whichever comes first.

B. Community colleges should use these data to improve upon or confirm the success of their programs and should demonstrate how these data are being used in their annual reports on assessment to the State Council of Higher Education. In analyzing the data, community colleges should pay particular attention to the performance, retention, and graduation rates of students by race.

C. Likewise, senior institutions should track the subsequent progress to the baccalaureate of transfer students by race.

Appendix

TRANSFER MODULE

Students must select from the following courses in order to complete the transfer module. All courses must be completed within the Virginia Community College System, and students must earn a grade of C or better in each course if they wish to transfer the set as a module. This package should be acceptable at all senior institutions throughout the state as complete or partial fulfillment of their general-education requirements. Senior institutions should specify and publish those courses or distribution requirements that they consider equivalent to this module.

ENGLISH (6 credit hours)

ENG 111-112:	College Composition

HUMANITIES (6 credit hours)

ART 101,102:	History and Appreciation of Art
MUS 121,122:	Music Appreciation
ENG 241,242:	Survey of American Literature
ENG 243,244:	Survey of English Literature
ENG 251,252:	Survey of World Literature
HUM 201,202:	Survey of Western Culture
PHI 101,102:	Introduction to Philosophy
PHI 211,212:	History of Western Philosophy

Note: Studio courses in the Fine Arts are excluded from the transfer module, but may be acceptable at the institution of the student's choice.

SOCIAL SCIENCE (6 credit hours)

ECO 201,202:	Principles of Economics
GEO 221,222:	Regions of the World
PLS 211,212:	U. S. Government
PLS 241,242:	International Relations
PSY 201,202:	Introduction to Psychology
PSY 231,232:	Life Span Human Development
SOC 201,202:	Introduction to Sociology
SOC 211,212:	Principles of Anthropology

SCIENCE (8 credit hours in one sequence, including lab)

BIO 101-102:	General Biology
BIO 231-232:	Human Anatomy and Physiology
CHM 101-102:	General Chemistry
CHM 111-112:	College Chemistry
CHM 113-114:	University Chemistry (10 cr. hrs.)
NAS 101-102:	Natural Sciences
PHY 101-102:	Introduction to Physics
PHY 201-202:	General College Physics
GOL 105-106:	Physical and Historical Geology

Or the combination of GOL 105: Physical Geology with NAS 130: Elements of Astronomy

HISTORY (6 credit hours in one sequence)

HIS 101-102:	History of Western Civilization
HIS 111-112:	History of World Civilization
HIS 121-122:	U. S. History

MATH (3 credit hours in college-level course)[6]

Total credit hours = 35

(NOTE: Many senior-college programs, particularly BA programs, require majors to take courses or demonstrate competency in a foreign language. Although foreign languages are not included in the transfer module, students should begin these requirements early in preparation for transfer.)

Footnotes

1 All references to community colleges also apply to Richard Bland College and its students.

2 Transfer degrees are the Associate of Arts (A.A.), the Associate of Science (A.S.), and the Associate of Arts and Sciences (A.A.&S.).

3 This statement is contingent upon adoption of the revised Table 5-1 ("General Education and Additional Requirements for Associate Degrees") with respect to the A.A., A.S., and A.A.&S. degrees by the Virginia Community College System.

4 Transfer students who pursue an A.A.S. degree program would benefit particularly from such a mechanism. Currently these students have no formal option for combining occupational-technical preparation with a transfer-oriented general-education sequence of courses.

5 The number of credits and distribution requirements in the module were influenced by a study of lower-division general-education requirements common to most of the Commonwealth's senior institutions and by the general-education requirements for the transfer associate degrees of the Virginia Community College System (Table 5-1).

6 The Joint Committee recommends in its Recommendations for Implementation that a set of acceptable mathematics courses be identified for inclusion in the module.

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